

Tithing Principles in the Bible I

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I'm going to talk about a topic that is very dear to everyone's heart, and that is money—tithes and offerings. I get papers all the time. I got one on tithing that says that in the Old Testament it was physical, then when you come to the New Testament it is spiritual. since you are to tithe of your fruits, you don't have to send in any money to anybody anywhere because:

Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (vs 22-23).

Then I got a paper recently from someone who said, the only thing that God requires on tithing and offering are the things that He has created, such as the animals for the firstborn offering and the sacrifices and there's no place that requires absolute tithing on gold, silver, money and things like this. So therefore, today the ministers ought to be as Jesus said to send them out with no money. If you survive, well 'when you come and visit us we'll give you a meal and send you on your way.'

Then they say that there's no place in the New Testament where Jesus took tithes. I read one in *The Journal* and what happens is they focus in on the abuse of tithes by ministers, rarely do they focus in on abuse of tithes by brethren. So, they gauge what they believe based upon how they've been offended by a man. That's the same kind of reasoning as saying, 'Well, because the Jews keep the Sabbath the way that they keep them, therefore, we don't have to keep the Sabbath.'

We're dealing also with a lot of very askewed thinking and the lack of putting the Scriptures together properly. In the research of the paper that was given to me, at the end of it says, 'Well, I hope you embrace the truth.' That is, '*my* view of what *I* believe the truth is,' rather than what the Bible shows.

To cover this properly we need to look at the overall aspect of it. Today we don't deal in animal sacrifices, and we don't deal in gold and silver literally—do we? *No!* How do we deal in money? plastic and paper? If that's the case, then no one anywhere owes anything to God based upon that reasoning. We'll take a look at it and we'll look at every one here.

Those who preach the Gospel should go out and do it without taking anything, because that's what Jesus told the apostles. Sure enough, He did on this occasion; this is after He chose the 12 apostles:

Matthew 10:5: "These twelve Jesus sent out

after commanding them, saying, 'Do not go into *the* way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into a city of the Samaritans.'" A lot of people say that the Gospel should only be preached to the descendants of the Israelites and not to the Gentiles.

- Is what Jesus is going to command here perpetual down through time?

or

- Is it for their first preaching of the Gospel?

Since Jesus wanted to make a point, here's what He told them:

Verse 6: "But go instead to the lost sheep of *the* house of Israel. And *as you are* going, proclaim, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' Heal *the* sick. Cleanse *the* lepers. Raise *the* dead. Cast out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. Do not provide gold, nor silver, nor money in your belts, nor a provision bag for *the* way, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff; **for the workman is worthy of his food** [hire]" (vs 6-10).

How far do you suppose that they went? Look at any map of Judea. Since they didn't go into any of the cities of the Samaritans, the furthest they went is into Judea and then up to Galilee. That's really not very far, and their whole situation was entirely different.

Example: If you watch some things on the History Channel, I watched one about the rise of the Persian Empire. They built a fantastic highway that went from Susa, which is on the eastern slope just outside of the Mesopotamian Valley. They built a road coming up from the Mesopotamian Valley right on up through what is modern day Turkey down to the city of Ephesus.

Then they had a branch that went over to Bosphorus Dardanelle and actually it was Darius who made the first bridge across the Bosphorus by putting boats as pontoons and putting a platform of wood so they could cross it. That's how they came in and conquered that part of it. What they did along the highway is have inns. Just like today, a motel. You come along every 20 miles and here's an inn. You can get food, you can get fodder for your animals, and you can refresh yourself and so forth.

All of this was paid for *with money*. There may be some people that they already knew along the way, that's fine; that's true. But also, if you're doing miracles, people are going to be willing to take you in and feed you, and so forth. So, it's a far different proposition than what we're dealing with today.

Verse 11: “And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there remain until you leave. When you come into the house, salute it; and if the house is indeed worthy, let your peace be upon it. But if it *is* not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you leave *that* house or that city, shake off the dust from your feet. Truly I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for *the* land of Sodom and Gomorrah in *the* day of judgment than for that city” (vs 11-15).

Then he explains what they’re going to do. Part of this is the immediate thing that they were going to do, part of it is also prophetic when you get down a little later on and He says, ‘You will not have gone over all the cities of Israel until the Son of man comes.’ When we read these things we have to understand that there’s an immediate thing that they’re doing and then there’s a prophetic thing for the future and be able to discern the difference.

This is why in studying this and putting it together:

- we need to *rightly divide the Word of God*
- we need to *look at the overall principles* that God is talking about
- we need to *make a proper judgment* concerning what we do today

Mark 6:7: “And He called the twelve to *Him* and began to send them out, two by two; and He gave them authority over unclean spirits. And He commanded them not to take anything for *the* journey except a staff—no bag of provisions, nor bread, nor money in the belt; but *to* be shod with sandals; and not to put on two coats. Then He said to them, ‘Wherever you *go*, and come into a house, remain there until you leave *that city*’” (vs 7-10).

Verse 12: “And they went out and proclaimed that *all* should repent. And they cast out many demons; and *they* anointed with oil many sick people, and healed *them*” (vs 12-13).

We have that parallel account in Matt., Mark and Luke. What we see in the command that He gave them that we just read in Matt. 10 was a temporary command. It was not to be in perpetuity, because things were going to change.

Luke 22:35: “And He said to them, ‘When I sent you without purse and provision bag and sandals, did you lack anything?’ And they said, ‘Nothing.’ Then He said to them, ‘Now, however... [He changed it; from this time forward it would be different] ...let the one who has a purse take *it*, and likewise *his* provision bag; and let the one who does not have a sword sell his garment and buy *one*’” (vs

35-36). When they were to go out and preach, now it was going to be a different proposition.

Let’s look at the command that Jesus gave in Matt. 28. Now they were to go into all the world. Let’s see how it was a broad command:

Matthew 28:18: “And Jesus came *and* spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, *even* until the completion of the age.’ Amen” (vs 18-20).

With this commission, it doesn’t tell us except with a broad perspective of what to do. With this we have to use the rest of the Word of God and we have to make judgments as to how we’re going to do it. We also have to rely on the Spirit of God to lead us in the things that we need to do and where we need to go and how it needs to be done. We find that in the book of Acts. This is quite a thing!

What was one of the things that Jesus taught them to do? One mistake that people make is that they fail to realize a very important thing: ***Not everything has to be restated in the New Testament to apply to New Testament Christians!*** That’s the thing that’s important! We will see much to the chagrin of people what Jesus did concerning tithing, but most people are not willing to accept it because it’s in a summary, rather than ‘you have heard it said in the past that you should tithe; give *all* that you have.’ (said cynically and facetiously)

Luke 4:3: “Then the devil said to Him, ‘If You are *the* Son of God, command that this stone become bread.’ But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God”’” (vs 3-4). What is Jesus saying here? How many places did He say, ‘Don’t think that the Law and the Prophets have been done away; I didn’t come to abolish it’? What is He saying here? ***We have to live by every Word of God!***

Where was that found? *Since the New Testament wasn’t written, it’s found in the Old Testament!* That’s a very important thing for us to understand. Let’s go to where this is given—Deut. 8. We’ve gone through this in the past and in very great detail, and since some people have been in the Church a very long time—like one woman said to another woman: ‘Don’t you know there is no tithing in the New Testament’? Generally what happens is—I’ve seen it because I’ve had to handle the money for a long time; I no longer handle it absolutely directly—those who fall for the trap of not tithing... I’ve even heard one man say, ‘Well,

we ought to give, and give more than tithing.’ Did he ever do it? *NO!*

We will see that tithing is a system—tithes and offerings—that God setup, so it’s defined. He defines it, and the reason that He does is so that we won’t have many different schemes and things that people use to try and raise money.

What you need to do is step back and take a broad view and look at it from this point of view: How many churches that don’t believe in tithing, what is it that they have to do? Look at the Catholic Church, they charge for everything! If you want a funeral, you pay a thousand dollars or more. If you want a Mass, you pay for the Mass. If you want the priest to come and visit you, you pay for him coming. Look at all the schemes that other people have.

Look at what happened with Worldwide (Church of God) when they decided they didn’t need tithing. A lot of people said, ‘Well, Worldwide came to the point they didn’t preach about tithing anymore.’ What happened to them? *It was a device to destroy the organization, rather than searching for the Truth!*

Let’s look at something here that in principle helps us to understand what God wants us to know. This is just before they’re going into the ‘promised land.’ Moses says, Deuteronomy 8:1: “All the commandments which I command you this day shall you be diligent to observe *and to do* that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land, which the LORD swore to your fathers. And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness in order to humble you, to prove you, to know what is in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not” (vs 1-2). That’s the whole purpose of whatever it is that God wants us to do.

- the Foundation

Let’s understand that *the foundation of the whole Bible is GOD!* That’s why it says in the New Testament that Jesus Christ is the Foundation and you must build on that. But Jesus was the One Who was the Lord God of the Old Testament. Then after God being the foundation, what’s the next steps?

- the Law
- the Prophets

The next thing, which paves the way between the Old and New Testaments is the:

- teachings of Jesus

None of these are fighting against each other. We need to understand that.

- the Gospels

The Gospels tell about what God would tell you if He would come in the flesh and speak to you. Everything you want to know how God would talk to you if He came read and study the Gospels, because that’s what Jesus did.

The whole key is whether you keep the commandments or not. Then you can go to the New Testament and you can see absolutely the commandments are upheld, etc.

Verse 3: “And He humbled you and allowed you to hunger, and then He fed you with manna which you did not know, neither did your fathers know *it*, so that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone... [here’s the quote that Jesus quoted]: ...but by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.”

Just think for a minute the rest of Luke 4 and Matt. 4—what was it that happened? *Jesus was tempted by Satan* to become a magician, for lust of power for the whole world and all the wealth and riches and everything that belongs with it

Think of that as we are reading here in v 4: “Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.” It shows how people get accustomed to something. Can you imagine clothes not wearing out? Can you imagine walking in the desert in all the rough soil and your feet didn’t even swell? I think if we tried to do it today—even with walking boots—it would be a difficult proposition.

Verse 5: “And you shall consider in your heart that as a man chastens his son, *so* the LORD your God chastens you. And **you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God** to walk in His ways and to fear Him” (vs 5-6).

If you want to do a little side study: Go through the whole Bible and look up where it says to *keep the commandments*, and how many times does it say it. It’s not really too hard to figure out. But what happens in a lot of these things when people get their own ideas and miss the whole point, they are nudging over to the proposition that God is a liar. That’s basically what’s created this lawless society that we have today, which ‘hangs over the head’ of Protestantism with their false grace and lawlessness in getting rid of the commandments of God.

Verse 7: “For the LORD your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land in which you shall eat bread without scarceness. You shall not lack any *thing* in it. *It is* a land whose stones... [I want you to notice what’s

also included here because this becomes very important]: ...are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig copper” (vs 7-9). What we have here is that all of these things come into a tithing proposition. Why is that?

Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness of it, the world, and those who dwell in it.” Everything in the earth God owns!

Let’s look at what Moses says here, and think about this in the overall principle, Deuteronomy 8:10: “When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land, which He has given you. **Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes,** which I command you today” (vs 10-11). That’s very inclusive.

Verse 12: “Lest *when* you have eaten and are full and have built goodly houses and lived in *them*.” If we don’t fill that prophecy to the full today, I don’t know what does. Look at all the nations of modern Israel and they have the wealth of the world. Though it is a deceptive wealth, because it’s all based now upon debt! They still have fantastic wealth beyond any other people in the world.

Verse 13: “And *when* your herds and your flocks multiply... [which you give tithes and offerings on] ...and your silver and your gold is multiplied...” That’s included in the same thing. We’re going to see that God says that this is *wealth!*

“...and all that you have is multiplied, then you become haughty of heart, and you forget the LORD your God... [that’s exactly what the Laodiceans have done] ...Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage” (vs 13-14). What we need to do is make a *spiritual* comparison here.

- Did God bring us out of Satan’s world?
- Did He call us to come out of it?
- *Yes He did!*
 - ✓ to give us His Spirit
 - ✓ to reveal His way
 - ✓ to give us understanding of His Word

Verse 15: “Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness *with* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where *there was* no water, Who brought forth water for you out of the rock of flint, Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, so that He might humble you and that He might prove you to do you good in your latter end” (vs 15-16). Everything we go through is so that God will bless

us.

Verse 17: “**Beware lest you say in your heart, “My power and the might of *my* hand has gotten me this wealth.”** What does wealth include?

- crops
- animals
- things you dig out of the earth

Verse 18: “**But you shall remember the LORD your God...**” What does that mean? How do you remember God? *By giving what He has said you need to give! By keeping His commandments!*

“...for *it is* He Who gives you power to get wealth...” (v 18). They’re going to find out later when the dollar collapses—we’ve heard all kinds of warnings that it’s imminent collapse is at hand—and somehow it’s held up. But, lo and behold, it’s going to happen!

“...so that He may confirm His covenant which He has sworn to your fathers as it is this *very* day” (v 18).

Think about this for just a minute: If you’re a farmer and you’re raising wheat, barely and things like that; or if you’re a rancher or shepherd and you give every tenth of the cattle or flock, and you give the firstborn, then you see someone that has a gold mine; you give your tithes, but the one who has the gold mine and has more wealth than you says, ‘I don’t have to tithe.’ Is that included in the power to get wealth that you dig out of the earth and the earth and the fullness thereof belongs to God? *Yes, indeed!*

Psalm 62:8: “Trust in Him at all times...” What is it that you have to trust God in? *That He will fulfill His promise to you if you are faithful in tithes and offerings!* It’s not just restricted to animals and crops.

“...you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; when weighed in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Trust not in oppression, and do not take pride in stolen goods; if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them. God has spoken once; twice I have heard this: **that power belongs to God**” (vs 8-11).

Whatever wealth you’re increased with, you have to honor God with it, because He gives you the power to do so. So, we have that together.

Now let’s see how this is applied. A lot of people hate going to Malachi, so where you hate going we will go. I realize that a lot of ministers have used this as leverage over people

to extract as much as they can because they weren't doing things the way that God desired. There are two responsibilities that are necessary in this:

1. those who give the tithes and offerings
2. those who administer them, because they are stewards of God's money

It has to be both ways! Yes, there has been stealing of tithes and offerings by ministers and religious leaders. Yes, there has been stealing of tithes by people who refuse to give them. In both cases what we're dealing with is something that 'two wrongs don't make a right.' Let me just state right here:

- 1) I'm not bring this sermon to get you to send in more money.

What I'm trying to do is preach the Truth of God and love God and keep His commandments.

- 2) I'm not interested in wealth and money and power.

That's not the purpose or goal in my life. That is vanity and that would come to a short end very quickly.

- 3) I do not take tithes myself

We live in a big house that is true. Today, in inflated value—although it's going down quite rapidly in California—we have a large 4200 sq. ft. house, which we paid for the land and house \$75,000 in 1977; it's paid for. I don't need a lot of money. I don't want a lot of money. I don't by flashy cars. I don't wear flashy jewelry and I don't by expensive clothing. Just to set the record straight, sometimes once in a while it's necessary to do that. We have three cars, they're paid for (out of our own money). I have a 'brand new' 1994 Nissan Maximum (I say that a little facetiously), because at 150,000 miles it still runs like a new car. I remember that someone said to me one time: When you drive a new car off the lot, it's used!

I try to deal prudently with our money. I draw a small salary, and I don't need any more. I don't want any more. Let's also understand that in tithing, people do not make their check out to me, they make it out to the Church (Christian Biblical Church of God). I do as Paul; I draw a wage. The tithes belong to God, so therefore, I have to be a steward. It is God's! It is not mine! This is why we give a full report every year. This is why we have an outside accountant do all of the accounting of where the money goes and how it's spent.

We live within the budget that God has sent us. The budget is whatever God sends us, that's fine. What do we use it for?

- to serve the brethren

- to teach the brethren
- to feed the brethren spiritually
- to reach out to new people

There are abuses that have always been. My wife Delores made a comment to me—Delores is my conscience and she's about burned in my brain—'Fred, when you speak, just talk,' rather than have a bunch of vanity and stupidity like they have with the Protestants prancing back and forth. 'Just talk!' I've got that burned in the back of my brain.

(go to the next track)

The reason that God defines concerning the things that grow out of the ground and animals differently than He would the things taken out of the ground—copper, brass, gold, silver, oil, and things like this—is because it's very easy to figure ten percent of that—*very easy*. But what goes to the priest He defines; what goes to the Levites He defines—and why He does it. The tithe belongs to God. Let's see what God says:

Numbers 18:20: "And the LORD said to Aaron, 'You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any part among them. I *am* your part and your inheritance among the children of Israel.'" What does that mean?

When they divided the land they separated out cities for the Levites, and they were to live there! They had their own agricultural area around it so that they could have their own food and so forth. Those were not to be taken away from the Levites. The inheritance that the other tribes received was a geographical area of land that you find defined on how they separated the land during the days of Joshua.

It would be like they were given an equivalent of a state for a tribe. No state was given to the Levite. He was given instead cities within those states. There would be Levites spread out among all the tribes of Israel. To compensate them for that, since they didn't have any land that they would own:

Verse 21: "And behold, **I have given the sons of Levi all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance...**" That's important to understand—*all the tenth or tithe*. Does he differentiate it when He says, 'all the tithe'? *No!* that means everything that is tithable.

Let's also understand why this belongs to God, because He gave it. God is not going to give something that doesn't belong to Him. "...for their service which they serve, the service of the tabernacle of the congregation" (v 21).

Verse 24: "But the tithes of the children of

Israel, which they offer *as* a heave offering to the LORD..." A heave offering is a very unusual statement. If you dedicated the land to God, that was also counted as a heave offering. If you gave money, that was counted as a heave offering. If you gave an animal as a sacrifice—for a burnt offering—that was a heave offering. So, the term 'heave offering' is a general statement that applies to anything having to do with tithing and offering.

"...I have given to the Levites to inherit. Therefore, I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.' And the LORD spoke to Moses saying, 'And you shall speak to the Levites, and you shall say to them, 'When you take tithes from the children of Israel, which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then **you shall offer up a heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth of the tithe**'" (vs 25-26). So, they were required to tithe as well. Just for people's inquiring minds, we tithe! We tithe well beyond the tenth.

Verse 27: "And your heave offering shall be credited to you as grain of the threshing-floor and as the fullness of the winepress." What does this tell us? *That includes more than animals, more than the tithing of the grain and the wine!*

Verse 28: "So, you also shall offer a heave offering to the LORD of all your tithes, which you receive from the children of Israel. And you shall give from these the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest. **Out of all your gifts you shall offer every heave offering of the LORD...**" (vs 28-29).

What does it mean gifts? *These would be the things in the way of money that people would give to the Levites in the way tithes* for services that they would perform for the local community. So, you have a bunch of Levites, say in the tribe of Manasseh, and you have the population come to them and bring them the tithes and offerings. Then they would also bring the gifts, which then would include gold, silver, extra things that were not necessarily listed in the way of grain, wine or animals.

"...of all the best of them, the Holy part out of it.' And you shall say to them, "When you have lifted up the best of it, then it shall be credited to the Levites as the increase of the threshing floor, and as the increase of the winepress'" (vs 29-30). That is tithing on things other than just the agricultural products.

Let's see where the priesthood robbed God, Malachi 1:6: "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I *am* a father, where is My honor? And if I *am* a master, where is My fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, **O priests, who despise My**

name. And you say, 'In what way do we despise Your name?' You offer defiled bread upon My altar..." (vs 6-7)—which means *not according to the commandments of God*—defiled or polluted!

"...And you say, 'In what way do we defile You?' In your saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible'" (v 7). We're not satisfied with what God gives us. Just like the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phineas—what did they do? They misappropriated things to themselves right when they brought it to offer, so they could take it *their way* rather than God's way.

Here it goes even further. They would keep the best for themselves, v 8: "And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it not evil?*.... [they were not doing it according to the way that God said] ...And if you offer the lame and the sick, *is it not evil?*"

After you give the firstfruits, the tithe herd of the flock would pass through the shoot and every tenth one would go to God. So, in that case, if it were lame, that would be acceptable as a tithe. But it wouldn't be acceptable as a burnt offering. What they did, they kept all the best and gave all the lame, all the blind and so forth. God says, "...*is it not evil?*"

"...Offer it now to your governor..." (v 8). Go to the governor and you say, 'Here's this runt of a cow that's really worthless, but I'm going to give it to you as a gift.' You wouldn't quite say it that way.

"...Will he be pleased with you, or accept your person?' says the LORD of hosts. 'And now entreat the favor of God, that He will be gracious unto you. This has been by your *own* hand, and now will He show regard for you?' says the LORD of hosts" (vs 8-9).

Here's the lesson that we have: Anything that we do that is contrary to the Word of God—in the worship and service of God and keeping His commandments—***if we do it our way instead of God's way, it's by our means!*** Where did that first begin? *Cain!*

The reason why God didn't accept His offering was because he didn't do it according to God's instructions. He wanted to it by *his means* and *his way!* This becomes very important. If we try to do things *our way*, for example Sunday-keeping. You go to the Lord and say, 'Hey this is great.' God says, 'That's not My day! That's by *your means*, not Mine!' Same way with tithes and offerings.

Verse 10: "Who *is there* among you who will even shut the *temple* doors or kindle a *fire on* My altar without *being paid?*...." They were paid! When you really understand what was at the temple with the gold, silver and everything, it was the

banking center of the Jewish world. There was great wealth that was there because they had tithes coming in the form of money.

“...I have no pleasure in you,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘I will not accept an offering from your hand’” (v 10). It all has to be according the way that God has commanded.

We’ll go through these things and understand what we are dealing with that’s important.

Verse 12: “‘But you are profaning it when you say, ‘The table of the LORD, it *is* polluted; and its fruit, His food, *is* contemptible.’ You also said, ‘Behold, what a weariness *it is!*’ And you have snuffed at it *in contempt,*’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘And you bring that which was taken by violence, and the lame, and the sick...’” (vs 12-13).

When you get into the terms of today’s tithes and offerings, if you do away with tithes and offerings, are you not in spiritual principle doing the same thing? *You’re bringing God what’s leftover!* Pretty soon you have nothing leftover, because that’s living principle that happens, because you don’t believe God; you don’t take up God on His promise or His challenge.

“...thus you brought an offering. Should I accept it from your hand?’ says the LORD. ‘But cursed *be* a deceiver who has in his flock an *acceptable* male—yet, he vows and sacrifices to the LORD a blemished *one*, for I *am* a great King,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and My name *is* feared among the nations’” (vs 13-14). I want you to think about this in relationship to:

- the Churches of God that don’t believe in tithing
- the Churches of God where they steal tithes—the ministry
- the Churches of God where the brethren steal tithes —because they look at the wrong that the ministers are doing and say, ‘I’m not going to send anything.’

If you’re in a situation like that, what you better do is tithe and put it in the bank and let God direct you where you ought to send it. But nevertheless, don’t take it from God, because notice what happens:

Malachi 2:1: “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you.” this also applies to the ministry. We can go through the New Testament and look at the qualifications for an elder, look at what he needs to do, how he needs to handle it, and so forth.

Verse 2: “‘You will not hear, and if you will not lay *it* to heart to give glory to My name,’ says the

LORD of hosts, ‘then I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yea, I have indeed cursed them *already* because you do not lay *it* to heart.’” This is what happens.

Verse 3: “Behold, I will rebuke your seed; and I will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your appointed feasts....” He’s not here talking about tithes and offerings directly, but the whole thing of the abuse of authority of those who are to teach the people.

I’ve had people write in and say, ‘We went to the Feast of Tabernacles and we didn’t hear one word about the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles.’ Or, ‘We went to the Days of Unleavened Bread and didn’t hear one thing concerning about the Days of Unleavened Bread or the meaning of it.’ That’s exactly the same thing that is here. What they are getting is *the dung of men’s ideas* of what they are preaching. Exactly the same thing today.

Verse 4: “‘And you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, so that My covenant might be with Levi,’ says the LORD of hosts.” It was!

What is the covenant that is with those who are ministers and teachers today that God makes. We find it in: 1-Tim. 3 and Matt. 20. How are those who serve the people to be?

- *To be a servant of all;* not a lord over!
- *To be one who gives;* not an extractor!
- *To teach the Word of God in Truth;* not in fables!

We have the same principle that carries over.

Verse 5: “My covenant with him was *one* of life and peace, and I gave them to him *for* fear; that he might fear Me, and he was in awe before My name. The Law of Truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips. He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and turned away many from iniquity” (vs 5-6). This is what we are to do! You can find the parallels in the New Testament.

Verse 7: “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and *the people* should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.” That’s what he was to do.

Here we have misbehavior by the priests and the same kind of misbehavior by the ministers today. Of course, it’s been down through history. I know one thing that is interesting, it says, ‘You that teach the Law, don’t you teach yourself?’ We have to teach ourselves!

One of the things that was mentioned to me: Isn’t it interesting that when you go through and

study the lives of the kings and so forth, that they made gigantic mistakes toward the end of their life. You think about that! My prayer to God is: ‘God, however long I live, please don’t let me fall into that pattern.’ You can see what happened to David. He was probably 50-years-old when he had the affair with Bathsheba. Then he was about 65 when he numbered Israel. Look at Solomon in his old age.

Then look at Hezekiah who did great works for God. He was ready to die and God gave him 15 years to celebrate when the ambassadors from Babylon came over and Hezekiah showed them all the wealth that was in the kingdom—didn’t hide anything—and became so foolish and selfish that after God gave him another 15 years to live, then God said, ‘All right, since you have done this, there is going to be punishment upon the people, but not in your lifetime. Hezekiah said, ‘That’s good, I’ll have peace in my lifetime.’ So, he turned out to be very self-centered and not thinking about anything in advance.

- What happened?
- How were they punished?
- Who was his son?
- *Manasseh—for 55 years!*

What’s happened to the Church of God because the self-proclaimed leader of the Church was foolish in his old age? *The Church no longer exists!* All the wealth and everything that they had, instead of serving God, they became vain in it and served themselves. I need to let that be indelibly burned in my mind, because maybe there’s something that, as we get older, we become more susceptible to making those kinds of mistakes. We just need to be upfront about it and understand it.

Verse 8: “But you have departed out of the way...” the way of the Lord includes everything:

- all of His commandments
- all of His statutes
- all of His judgments

“...you have caused many to stumble at the Law.... [get made, angry, disillusioned, and turn off and leave God] ...You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,’ says the LORD of hosts.” (v 8). We could say the same thing, the covenant of the ministry for the Church of God today.

Verse 9: “Therefore, I have also made you contemptible and base before all the people...” That can also apply to all of the Protestant ministers. You turn on the television and you see their contemptible and base performances that they have.

I was channel surfing and saw Jimmy Swaggart who got caught in adultery and he cries at

the drop of a hat and getting all the people worked up in a frenzy with his preaching and pacing up and down. Then he was running around on that huge stage and I thought: Doesn’t that fit this; it’s contemptible! What terrible behavior!

Does that honor God? *No!* It causes people who see it—maybe they’re interested in God—say, ‘How can that be of God? This is nonsense!

“...just as you have not kept My ways but have been partial in the Law.’ Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously, each man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?” (vs 9-10).

Then it talks about Judah has dealt treacherously and why He hates divorce. I’ll just have to mention here that divorce has been a terrible problem within the Church of God. Divorce and remarriage has been abused because of contemptible ministers.

Let’s understand that this is not only instruction, but it is also prophecy, Malachi 3:1: “Behold, I will send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, Whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple...” Who is He talking about? *John the Baptist and Himself, as He came as Jesus Christ!*

“...even the Messenger of the covenant... [bringing the New Covenant] ...in Whom you delight. Behold, He comes,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘But who can endure the day of His coming?....’” (vs 1-2). We have in v 1 the first coming; in v 2 we have the second coming:

“...And who shall stand when He appears? For He *is* like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap. And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. And He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness” (vs 2-3). He literally did that with the priests and Levites in the first century. Did they repent? *No!*

Verse 5: “And I will come near to you for judgment. And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against those who swear falsely, and against those who extort from the hired laborer’s wages—and *against* those who turn away the widow, the orphan, and the stranger because they did not fear Me,’ says the LORD of hosts.” All of those things have happened within the Church of God—haven’t they? If you’ve been in the Church of God 30+years, you’ve seen all of that parade before your eyes.

Verse 6: “**For I am the LORD, I change not....** [That’s important to understand. Keep that in mind. What is He talking about next?] ...Therefore,

you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

Now we start talking about the abuses of the children of Israel. First of all, He corrects the priests. Then He gives a projection forward to the coming of Christ. Let’s see what He does:

Verse 7: “From the days of your fathers, you have gone away from My statutes, and have not kept *them*....” Deut. 8—When all your wealth is increased and everything that you have is multiplied, you forget God!

“...Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “But you say, “In what way shall we return?” Will a man rob God?...” (vs 7-8). If the tithes and offerings do not belong to God, then there would be no robbery. If someone steals your neighbor’s car, he hasn’t taken anything from you—has he? You don’t own it.

Same thing if there are no tithes and offerings you can’t steal it. That becomes an important thing because we’re dealing with a principle that God also deals with, which is ‘put your money where your mouth is.’

“...Yet, you are robbing Me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings! You *are* cursed with a curse; for you are robbing Me, *even* this whole nation” (vs 8-9).

So, things happen when you don’t take care of God’s part of the wealth that you have, even though today it’s kind of an illusionary wealth because it’s based on debt. If you take out any paper money and look at it, that’s what the New Testament calls ‘script.’ It says, ‘*this note is legal tender for all debts public and private.*’ As long as you have the psychological value of it, that’s what it’s worth. But even then we still have increase—don’t we? *Yes, we do!*

Verse 10: “Bring all the tithes... [anything that is of wealth (Deut. 8)] ...into the treasure house...” Some people say that is just for grain and things. Let me tell you very clearly, at the temple they had areas where they stored grain, areas where they stored silver and gold, and many other things that the people brought that they would tithe and give offerings on.

“...so that there may be food in My house. And **prove Me** now with this,” says the LORD of hosts, “to see if I will not surely open the windows of heaven for you, and pour out a blessing for you, until *there is* not enough *room to receive it.*” God says to *prove Me! Test Me!*

That’s why God honors tithing of anyone who tithes; anyone who gives offerings. Satan knows this; it’s an important thing to understand. Even many of the Protestants are blessed in their

tithing, because that is a promise that God has given. It crosses even knowledge and understanding of the Word of God to the best of their ability. If that’s all they know, God will bless them. You can say, ‘God, I’m going to prove You.’

You can’t withhold and ask God to bless you—ask God to prove Himself—before you respond to Him. God is not the One Who left. People are the ones who left God! So, we prove Him!

Verse 11: “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes...” There are many devourers. What one of the biggest devourers that people have today with the plastic money and credit cards? *Interest!* What is another devourer? *Poor health; spend all your money!* The woman that said to this other woman, years ago, that you don’t have to tithe. I can tell you exactly what happened to them. They ended up spending all their money on excess doctor bills because they left off tithing to God.

The choice is in our hands. It’s not for ministers to extract from people. By the way, I don’t receive tithes; the Church does; I receive a salary from it. We’ll see that that’s how Paul did it.

“...and it shall not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field,” says the LORD of hosts. “And all nations shall call you blessed; for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts” (vs 11-12). Let’s just look at modern Israel today and let’s apply this.

- Has this happened?
- Are we cursed in the ground?
- Are we cursed in the cities?

If you remember God in tithes and offerings and you give of what you have, you’re also going to be more bound to remember the rest of His commandments. If you *prove God* He will answer you. But what has happened? *We’ve become selfish! Self-consumed! Spending every dime that we have as a nation on buying things!* There isn’t even a savings rate worth anything—less than 1%. Why? *Because we’re cursed with a curse!*

In the 1980s we were the leading lending nation of the world. Now we’re the greatest debtor that the world has ever seen. All of that is a curse! So, the moral of the story is that if you take from God what is His, He’s going to take from you what is His and also what also is yours—*both!*

This is not in isolation, you need to take the whole chapter: Verse 13: “Your words have been all too strong against Me,” says the LORD....” ‘We don’t need to do this, we can offer the lame, the blind, the second hand, we don’t have to tithe, offer.’

“...‘Yet, you say, “What have we spoken *so strongly* against You?” You have said, “It *is* vain to serve God; and, what profit *is it* that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?”” (vs 13-14). They began to look out into the world and look at all of the wicked who prosper in their way and say, ‘Look, I’m struggling here; I need all the these things.’ God promised sufficiency.

Verse 15: ““And now we *are* calling the arrogant blessed. Yea, they that work wickedness are built up, they even tempt God, and are delivered.’ Then those fearing the LORD spoke together, *each* man to his neighbor....” (vs 15-16). If you fear the Lord, what do you do?

- you love God
- you keep His commandments
- you give tithes and offerings
- you walk in the commandments of God
- you live your life according to the way of God

“...And the LORD listened and heard. And a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the LORD, and for those who thought upon His name” (v 16). What does this come down to? *It comes down to eternal life!*

Verse 17: ““And they shall be Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘in the day that I will make up My own special jewels.... [God is making up a crown for you; God is going to give you true wealth] ...And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.’ Then you shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God, and the one who does not serve Him” (vs 17-18).

Part of serving God is keeping His commandments concerning tithes and offerings!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Galatians 5:22-23
- 2) Matthew 10:5-15
- 3) Mark 6:7-10, 12-13
- 4) Luke 22:35-36
- 5) Matthew 28:18-20
- 6) Luke 4:3-4
- 7) Deuteronomy 8:1-9
- 8) Psalm 24:1
- 9) Deuteronomy 8:10-18
- 10) Psalm 62:8-11
- 11) Numbers 18:20-21, 24-30
- 12) Malachi 1:6-10, 12-14

13) Malachi 2:1-10

14) Malachi 3:1-18

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1 Timothy 3
- Matthew 20

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